

It may seem very ungracious to say so, but we must confess we regret to find Mr. Cassin continuing his "*Fasti Ornithologiæ*." We would far rather see him occupied in revising with his wonted skill and diligence obscure groups of birds. His last labour is that of galvanizing the dead body of names applied by a nameless author in the '*Encyclopædia Londinensis*.' There is no doubt that our good friend has, to a certain extent, the law of priority on his side ; but we would ask him to have some compassion upon human infirmity ; if, however, he will not listen to an appeal for mercy, we will meet him on his own ground. Can the names bestowed by a nameless author stand ? Mr. Cassin, we think, is bound to show us who his author was. As it is, he has only told us who he was not. Mr. John Wilkes, the Editor of the '*Encyclopædia Londinensis*,' was not the Mr. John Wilkes of '*North Briton*' notoriety ! But we entirely refuse admission among the ranks of ornithologists even to the editor of the aforementioned *Encyclopædia*, and we must regard the ornithological articles therein as the work of an anonymous authority. Now an anonymous authority is in scientific matters justly regarded as no authority at all. When we have somebody tangible to deal with, then we shall be in a position to consider the question Mr. Cassin has raised ; and then, if need be, we may possibly allow the validity of the names bestowed by this somebody on the thirty-two species to which he was apparently the first to affix Latin appellations*.

XX.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

THE following letters, addressed "To the Editor of '*The Ibis*,'" have been received :—

Dobroyde, Aug. 23, 1867.

SIR,—During my rambles in search of specimens in the Clarence-River district, and especially in the neighbourhood of

* It would seem as if there must have been more than one edition of this *Encyclopædia*. In the copy we have consulted, though the pagination, date, and other particulars agree with those given by Mr. Cassin, we do not find any mention, under Latin names, of the various species of *Buceros*, for example, the nomenclature of which is said by him to be thereby affected.

Grafton, I found *Donacola castaneothorax* very abundant, meeting with it almost every day in small troops of from five to ten in number. As very little has been recorded with respect to this species, a few notes upon it may not be unacceptable.

I had no difficulty in finding its nests and eggs, both of which closely resemble those of the *Estreldeæ* and *Amandinæ*. The nest is a large structure, in shape like a flask or bottle placed on its side; and the entrance, which is about an inch and a half wide, is situated at the end of a long neck, the whole being about 14 inches in length by 6 inches in diameter. It is usually built near the top of some bushy shrub or in tangled masses of vines, and composed of grasses and the leaves of reeds, with fine stems of plants (*Goodenia* or *Lobelia*, according to the district its owner frequents), being lined with finer materials—the downy tops of reeds and flags, and occasionally a few feathers. It closely resembles the nest of *Estrelde phæton*, which I have received from Port Denison, and, like that, is often found placed among the stiff leaves of a grass-like plant growing upon the sides of the trees in and about the edges of the scrubs. The eggs are from four to five in number, slightly larger than those of *Estrelde temporalis*, being from .6 to .65 in. in length by from .4 to .5 in. in breadth. They are of a dead limy-white colour, and are more frequently elongated than roundish in form.

I usually found *Donacola castaneothorax* in company with *Estrelde temporalis*, frequently in the fields picking out the grain from the ears on the ground round the wheat-stacks. During the month of September I found them in all stages of plumage and in every variety of situation,—in the “opens,” among the brushes, and on the edges of creeks and lagoons; while a pair might often be seen on the river-bank, either hopping about among the herbage under the acacia-trees, or perched on the reed-tops, picking out the seed from the feathery tassels which fringe its edges.

Hundreds, I might say thousands, of this species are sent down yearly to Sydney from Rockhampton, Port Denison, and other ports of Queensland. Few, if any, come from the Clarence or Richmond Rivers; for, with the exception of *Amadina*

lathamii and *Estrelda temporalis*, I do not know of any species which are found in those parts, while from the Queensland ports six or eight species are annually received by the Sydney dealers. From South Australia not more than two or three species are procured, chiefly *Amadina castanotis*.

The young of *Donacola castaneothorax*, on leaving the nest, are of a uniform dull buff-colour. The fully adult bird differs slightly from that described by Mr. Gould, having the *upper part of the flanks chestnut-brown*, barred alternately with black and white. The lower part of the flanks is white barred with black, more largely at the tip of the feathers; the thighs, vent, and *under tail-coverts are jet black*. The rump, upper tail-coverts, and two middle tail-feathers are of a glossy waxy orange-yellow. The space between the eyes and bill, line over the eye, ear-coverts and throat, black, with a tinge of plum-colour in certain lights; the ear-coverts have a narrow line of brown down the middle of each feather. The rest of the head is dark-brown, the feathers with lighter edges. There is also a wash of reddish-chestnut (much deeper in tint than that of the chest) over the back and wings. Bill, legs, and toes dark horn-blue, the edges of the mandibles lighter; the claws dark-brown. The whole length is 4·25 inches; bill ·4 by ·3 across the nostrils; tail 1·5; tarsus ·55; wing from carpal joint 2·1 inches. The sexes are alike in plumage.

I am, &c.,

EDWARD P. RAMSAY.

Camp, Punjaub,
December 7, 1867.

SIR,—I think I have ascertained beyond doubt that *Saxicola capistrata* is only the young male of *S. picata*. I come to this conclusion, first, because, out of some twenty specimens of the former shot and preserved, not one was either a female or an old bird; secondly, because I have three specimens, exactly bridging the difference between the creamy-white head of *S. capistrata* and the black of *S. picata*. In one the centre of the white head is becoming dusky; in another the top of the head is black, edged with dusky, only leaving a broad superciliary creamy stripe con-

tinued to the occiput; in the third the stripe has disappeared, only a few of the feathers being dusky instead of black. Thirdly, because females shot in company with males of both forms are identical. Fourthly, because the birds correspond in every respect except in the colour of the top of the head*, even to the yellow colouring of the interior of the mouth, which reminds one forcibly of the same peculiarity in some of the Flycatchers.

I cannot help here remarking that these birds *are* Flycatchers in habit. I have watched them now time after time, sitting on any high solitary spray of a thorny bush (the koreel, *Capparis spinosa*, is perhaps their favourite), flitting their tails for a moment or so, and then darting off their perch, seizing a fly and returning to their post, just like a Shrike, a Flycatcher, or a Roller. Often, no doubt, they darted on to an ant or tiny worm, and remained an instant on the ground to devour it; but more often they caught flies and tiny beetles in the air.

To return, it would be interesting to ascertain whether the true *S. leucomela* of Europe and North Africa is, like *S. capistrata*, the young of some species of which the adults have black heads.

The sandy, half desert, treeless plains of the cis-Sutledge States of the Punjab (where I now am), between Ferozpoor and Fazilka, on the Sutledge and Sirsa, Hessar and Hansie, are just the localities that all our Indian *Saxicolæ* affect. One morning recently I shot all the five supposed species, males and females, within the space of a square mile.

Saxicola ænanthe, here rather rare, is one of the commonest of our cold-weather visitants in the North-western Provinces. In Meerut, Agra, Muttra, Etawah, and doubtless other districts they abound; but while affecting waste places, like *S. capistrata* (vel *picata*) and the others, with *S. atrogularis* they like waste places in the neighbourhood of cultivation better, it seems to me, than perfect wastes like those south of Ferozpoor. Mr. Blyth (Ibis, 1867, p. 14) seems to fancy that the females of *S. picata* and *S. leucuroides* may have been mistaken for *S. ænanthe*; but the latter bird is one of the commonest in Upper India; and though it is just possible that it may differ in some trifling particulars

* [Mr. Gould tells us that *S. capistrata* has more white on the back than *S. picata*.—Ed.]

from the true *S. ænanthe* of Europe, no one could ever confound it with the females of *S. picata* (vel *capistrata*) or of *S. leucuroides*, which are of a wholly different shade of brown. On the other hand, the females of *S. atrogularis* might easily be, and constantly are, mistaken for *S. ænanthe*; but the bills and feet are feebler, the birds are slightly smaller and lighter (in weight, I mean). There is no supercilium, or only a trace of it; the lores are grey; all the tail-feathers are nearly wholly black, there are no narrow white tips; and the upper tail-coverts are fawn-coloured. *S. atrogularis* is common in waste places all over the Punjab and the North-west Provinces west of Cawnpoor.

S. picata vel *capistrata* (I do not know which name is the earlier*) is very common in this portion of the cis-Sutledge States of the Punjab, and is found occasionally throughout the North-west Provinces westward of Allahabad, but of course only in suitable localities—wastes thickly dotted with thorny scrub.

Saxicola leucuroides is the rarest of all, I believe, so far at least as number of specimens is concerned; but even this species is not very uncommon in many localities in the Punjab, North-west Provinces, Oude, and the Central Provinces, and has, it strikes me, a wider range in India than any of the others. I have, however, observed this less closely than the other species; and therefore, although some of the specimens now before me lead me to doubt whether even this is a good species, I say nothing more about it for the present. I hope soon to send you a paper on our Indian *Saxicolæ*, with a series of specimens, male and female, of all of them.

Pelecanus crispus must be added to the birds of India. I have now quite recently shot a third specimen. Mr. Blyth, in a letter to me, seemed to doubt the correctness of my identification; but there can, I think, be little doubt of the species. The large size, the feathers of the forehead not prolonged to a point, but ending squarely emarginate, the pearly whiteness of the plumage, the black shafts of the feathers, the coloration of the bill and feet, all seem to me to prove the species. One specimen

* [We believe there can be no doubt on this point. *S. picata* was described many years ago by Mr. Blyth; *S. capistrata* was only recently separated by Mr. Gould from the *S. leucomela* of Pallas.—ED.]

(a female), that I shot last year in the Etawah district just at the commencement of the warm weather (when all the Pelicans but *P. philippensis* leave us), had at the base of the neck a very pale straw-coloured patch; but that which I lately killed was of a uniform silvery hue, very different from any of our other Indian Pelicans. The dimensions of the female killed last year and the male that I lately killed were as follows:—

	Female.	Male.
	inches.	inches.
Length	67·5	70
Expanse	113	114
Wing.....	27	26·25
Tail	7·5	9·5
Tarsus	4·625	4·25
Bare portion of tibia	1·25	1·375
Foot, greatest length along middle toe ..	6	6·25
„ greatest width	8·5	8·75
Middle toe	5	5
„ its claw	·75	·687
Hallux	2	2
„ its claw	·75	·687
Bill from front including nail	15	16·5
„ from gape	16	17·25
„ width at gape	2·375	2·562
„ height at front	1·218	1·218
Pouch to where feathers commence	21·25	21·875
Circumference of tarsus	3	3
Weight	20 lbs.	18½ lbs.

Legs and feet in both pure plumbeous; irides very pale yellow; orbits, in the female, which I take to have been in nearly full breeding-plumage, bright though pale orange,—in the male, which was in the cold-weather plumage, and a young bird withal, creamy-white with a faint pink tinge.

Bill, in the female, dusky plumbeous; nail pale-orange yellow; edges of upper and lower mandibles for the terminal two-thirds yellowish horny. Pouch a deep orange-red, with a black patch on each side just at the base of the lower mandible.

In the young male the upper mandible was pale brown, greyish towards the tip, and dusky towards the base on the culmen;

nail wax-yellow. Lower mandible and pouch uniform creamy-white.

In the female, excepting the quills, primary coverts, and winglet, the whole plumage was white, with more or less of a pearly grey tinge on both the upper and under surfaces, according to the light in which it was looked at. There was a broad band at the base of the neck in front and at the sides, faintly tinged with a very pale straw-colour: there was not the faintest tinge of rosy anywhere.

The whole of the feathers of the head and neck were very narrow, long, soft and silky, much curled and twisted on the head, especially behind and just above the eye; and the feathers of the sinciput were much elongated, so as to form a dense full crest some 4.25 inches long. A line of feathers about 1.5 in. wide down the whole back of the neck was of a more snowy and less silky white than the rest of the neck. The scapulars, rump and upper tail-coverts, and median and greater wing-coverts were conspicuously black-shafted; and all these, except the longest of the scapulars, were very long and lanceolate. A few of the longest scapulars were broad and round, or mucronate at the end; and two or three of these had a good deal of greyish-brown about them, probably the remains of immature or non-breeding plumage. There was a beautiful satiny gloss over the whole back, scapulars, and tail; the two exterior tail-feathers with nearly the whole shafts black, and with a decided grey tinge on the outer webs to near the tip; the rest of the tail-feathers with only the terminal third of the shafts black. The primaries (all of which were white at the base) and their coverts and the winglet were dark brown. The second to the fifth primary emarginate on the outer web, and silvered with grey on the last above the emargination, which in the second was hidden by the coverts. There was more or less silvering of grey on the outer webs of all the other primaries, their coverts and winglets. The first five primaries were faintly notched on the inner web, and were pale or greyish-white on the latter above the notches, while the rest of the primaries had the inner portions of the inner webs white. This was still more conspicuous in the secondaries, which were of a much lighter brown, many of them having their

whole outer webs a silver-grey. Probably those which still retained the brown were the remains of the less mature plumage. The tertials were some of them pure white, while some were pearly-grey on the outer webs, and on the inner greyish-brown paling to grey or white towards the margin. The feathers of the base of the neck and breast were very thickly set, very narrow and pointed, the filaments along the margin a good deal separated.

The male, doubtless a young bird, altogether wanted the linear, lanceolate feathers. It had the whole head, neck, and lower surface of the body, and under surface of the wings (except the tips of the quills and a row of small coverts near the margin of the wing, which were pale wood-brown), the middle of the back, between the shoulders, the whole middle and lower back, rump, and upper tail-coverts white—slightly shaded with grey about the back of the neck, owing to the dark bases of the feathers showing more or less, but elsewhere very pure. The feathers of the head and neck were far shorter and more fur-like than in the female. There was scarcely any of the twisting and curling about the ear-coverts; and the crest was very small in volume and not above 2 inches in length. The whole of the scapulars and shoulder-feathers were broadly tipped with pale brown, which, owing to their overlapping each other, was the chief colour visible; and though their shafts were dark as in the female, they had not the linear lanceolate character so conspicuous in the latter. The upper tail-coverts were dark-shafted, as in the female. The tail-feathers were white at the base on both webs, the greater part of the rest of the inner web white with a little grey towards the tips, and of the outer webs silvery grey; fully the basal third of the shafts white, the terminal two-thirds blackish; the tertials and their coverts nearly pure white. Only a row or two of the lesser coverts along the edge of the wing pale brown, and the tertials themselves and greater coverts with a tinge of the same hue about the tips. The whole of the lesser and median coverts, from the elbow to the carpal joint, pale brown (some of the feathers greyer and others more buffy) darker-shafted, and faintly tipped with white. Primaries and secondaries with white at their bases on both

webs, and with a large portion of their inner webs white, the rest a darkish brown. Winglet and primary greater coverts much the same colour. The greater coverts of the secondaries were mostly pure white, those only near the primaries tinged at the tips with rather pale buffy-brown.

I have thus transcribed *verbatim* from my notes (at the risk of being insufferably tedious) the descriptions of these two birds, recorded when they had just been killed, because Pelicans are not easily sent by post for comparison; and as Dr. Jerdon does not include *P. crispus* in his 'Birds of India,' and Mr. Blyth doubts its occurrence there, I think it very important that this species, of which I have now three examples, should be identified beyond all doubt. I myself believe it to be *P. crispus*; but the measurements and description above given will surely enable those who have access to museums at home to determine this point*.

Myriads of the Bughaira-Lark (*Melanocorypha torquata*) swarm in every one of the few "bajera" (*Peucillaria spicata*) stubble-fields that here and there diversify this almost waterless waste. In the lower and central portions of the Duab of the Ganges and Jumna this bird occurs, but only as a straggler, its little relative the Short-toed Lark, *Calandrella brachydactyla*, being there found in countless flocks. Here, on the other hand, the Short-toed Lark has few representatives, while the Bughaira-Larks are innumerable. These latter have a rather sweet note, not unlike that of *Galerita cristata*; they rise in rapid succession as you walk through the tall stubble, but are not at all wild; I shot thirteen running in a small field.

Of the European Courser, *Cursorius gallicus*, I found several small parties between Ferozpoor and Sirsa. People assure me that they breed in this country and in this neighbourhood. If so, it is rather singular; for in this same district I procured specimens of the Indian Courser, *C. coromandelicus*, a very nearly allied bird, differing chiefly in its much more decided coloration, which certainly does breed here. One scarcely expects to find two such very closely allied forms living and breeding in the same

* [Mr. Blyth, on reading the above remarks, is satisfied that Mr. Hume is right.—ED.]

locality. Perhaps, however, *C. gallicus* is only a winter visitant, or this may be the exact spot where the territorial limits of the two species meet.

The European Raven, *Corvus corax*, is common everywhere at Jhelum, Rawul Pindee, Lahore, Ferozpoor, and Sirsa. I cannot understand Captain Hutton's saying (as quoted by Dr. Jerdon) that he had never seen it in India. It is most common about stations and large towns; but a few are found everywhere about the upper portion of the Punjaub, even in the bare wastes of the Sirsa district.

The Willow-Sparrow, *Passer salicarius*, is found throughout the Sirsa and Hansie districts. In the Duab, at Etawah, and near Gwalior, I have shot single specimens; but about Sirsa it is found associated in immense flocks with the Common Sparrow (*P. indicus*). In some flocks these latter are mere stragglers, in others they form nearly one-half of the party. Wherever grass, seed, or bajera-fields are plentiful, bunches of these Sparrows are to be seen, now spreading wide over a field, now settling in a dense crowd on some large thorny caper-bush. Yesterday I got over fifty in three shots. All had fed on the seeds of the bajera (the bullrush-millet, as I have elsewhere called it). I had never killed so many Sparrows at a time, at least since I was a boy; and the very great diversity in plumage of the males struck me forcibly. The general tone of the mantle varied from a dingy rufous or sandy-chestnut to a regular maroon, while, as regards the extent and intensity of the black on the throat and breast, no two specimens agreed. I feel certain that any one comparing the two extremes of the series would have been inclined to separate them as distinct races; but there was not the slightest gap in the chain, and one and all were unquestionably *Passer indicus*. Whether our bird deserves a separate specific name, you will, I hope, be able soon to decide for me, as I am going to send home a large series killed at different seasons and places.

Of the Willow-Sparrow the males are very easily distinguished from those of the common bird. The black comes much lower down on the breast, and is much wider there; and the sides and flanks have numerous somewhat lanceolate blackish dashes. The

head and nape are deep chestnut (each feather narrowly tipped at present with lightish brown that wears off later in the year), instead of grey as in our domestic friend (or enemy, as some consider him). On the mantle the feathers are centred with black, edged, but by no means very broadly so, with straw-yellow, instead of being very broadly margined with rufous or chestnut as in the House-Sparrow. There is a well-marked white supercilium. The Willow-Sparrow is slightly larger and heavier, with a larger bill and somewhat longer hind claw.

The females of both species are much alike; though a difference in size, similar to, though less marked than, that noticed in the males, is observable.

One difference between the females seems constant: those of the Willow-Sparrow have the whole throat, front of the neck, and breast obscurely but yet unmistakeably streaked with faint dusky longitudinal striæ, similar to, though much less conspicuous than, those exhibited by the females of *Carpodacus erythrinus*. This may be only a seasonal peculiarity; but at the present moment it enables one at a glance to separate the females of the two species. Other differences consist in the supercilium of the Willow-Sparrow being more dingy, and in the entire absence in the mantle of the *very faint* tinge of rufous almost always observable in that of the female Indian House-Sparrow when freshly killed.

I have lately killed a great number of the Indian Houbara, *Otis macqueeni*, and hope soon to tell you more about them; at present, with reference to Dr. Jerdon's remarks, I shall only say that both male and female have, when adult, both the ruff and crest; they have these even now in December, and apparently keep them at all seasons; both are more developed in the male than in the female. The sexes, except as regards length of ruff and crest, are nearly alike in plumage, though the female is a little lighter in colour; the chief difference consists in the size, the males weighing up to $5\frac{1}{4}$ lbs., the females never exceeding $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Some old females had such fine ruffs that we took them at the moment we shot them for males; and others, young males, as they proved on dissection, had such short ruffs that I fancied they were very large females.

I am, &c., ALLAN HUME.

Cape Town, Dec. 17, 1867.

SIR,—The publication of my ‘Catalogue of the Birds of South Africa’ has given such an impetus to Ornithological inquiry in this colony, and has brought me so much additional information respecting nests, eggs, and habits, from new correspondents as well as old ones, that, if you will allow me an occasional page or two in ‘The Ibis,’ I shall be happy to communicate such of my notes as I think will prove interesting to your readers.

2. NEOPHRON PERCNOPTERUS. When I published the ‘Catalogue,’ I was not aware that this bird bred with us, all my inquiries having failed to produce an affirmative reply. A new correspondent, however, at Colesberg, Mr. A. F. Ortlepp, whose name will often appear in future, has informed me that they breed near that place, and has forwarded two magnificently coloured eggs, exceeding in that respect anything that I remember to have seen in collections. Mr. Ortlepp mentions a curious circumstance: beneath the nest were found vast numbers of the *crania* of small Rodents.

5. OTOGYPS AURICULARIS. These birds breed in August. Mr. Henry Jackson, from Beaufort, writes on the 30th, “Visited the Black Vulture’s nest to-day, and found one young one, two or three days old.” On the 31st he writes of

6. GYPS FULVUS. “To-day we stormed the Vulture’s ‘krantz’ [precipice], and only got three eggs—two addled, and one which was chipped by the young bird just ready to emerge. Had we been three weeks or a month earlier, we might have got several dozen. My last year’s attempt was made on the 19th October; and then the young birds were so large as to be mistaken for old ones, from the top of the ‘krantz’.”

38. ELANUS MELANOPTERUS. The egg of this species, received from Mr. William Atmore, of George, is pure white. Axis 1" 11"; diam. 1" 5". They seemed to come in with the Quail this year, about the 15th of October.

48. SERPENTARIUS REPTILIVORUS. A new correspondent, Mr. G. G. Reitz, of Riversdale, denies the statement that the legs of the young depend through the nest. He suggests that the extreme brittleness of the bones arises, in birds reared in confinement, from the fact that they are deprived of the lime de-

rived from the bones of the small mammals and reptiles devoured by them in their wild state and brought by their parents. He suggests sprinkling their food (usually raw meat) with chalk as a substitute. This is not a bad idea for those who rear Falcons.

59. *BUBO MACULOSUS*. Mr. H. Jackson sends numerous eggs of this species; he says it makes no nest, but lays on the bare sand, on a ledge in a river-bank.

HIRUNDO RUFIFRONS. My son has found this species breeding at Grootevadersbosch. The eggs are white, much pointed in shape at the small end, and spotted chiefly at the other, in the form of a ring, with dark green, brown, and yellow dots, with here and there a large well-defined spot. Axis 11"; diam. 7".

86. *HIRUNDO LUNIFRONS* [*H. alfredi*, Hartl. *suprà*, p. 153]. On this species Mr. Ortlepp makes the following interesting observations:—"Nests closely packed together, composed of pellets of mud. I counted no less than sixty in a square yard, against an overhanging bank. Each nest is half a sphere, with a small hole for entrance, sometimes with a short neck. Boers tell me that formerly these birds were unknown to them. When first seen they appeared in small numbers, which is not the case now, as I saw hundreds hawking about near Sandpoort. I calculate that at least 2000 will be hatched at that place this year." The eggs sent are very beautiful, being a delicate white, tinged with the faintest blush of pink, spotted chiefly in a ring near the other end with different-sized spots of various shades of brown verditer, and even yellow.

118. *UPUPA MINOR*. My son Leopold has taken several nests near Swellendam, chiefly in the walls of old "kraals" (enclosures for sheep and cattle). He is not certain that the female never leaves the nest, but speaks of always finding her at home, and of the stench of her dwelling. The eggs are of a very pale greenish-blue ground, smeared throughout, unevenly, with indistinct pale brownish. Axis 12"; diam. 8".

123. *NECTARINIA AFRA*. Mr. Atmore found several nests of this species in the Long Kloof, George district, in October. They were "well woven with the fibre of *Asclepias*, grass-bents, snake-skins, and all sorts of odd things, and then filled up with feathers. My boys have taken three or four nests, each with but

two eggs ; and I believe that to be the orthodox number." These are similar in colour (clouded grey-brown) and size to those of the western species *N. chalybea*.

131. *NECTARINIA FUSCA*. This plain-coloured Sun-bird I never saw till Mr. Ortlepp forwarded several individuals from Colesberg. To the description in my 'Catalogue' must be added that the sides of the throat, chest, belly, and under tail-coverts are white, more or less pure, the inside of the wing black, and the axillary tufts brilliant scarlet and orange. Length 5"; wing 2" 4"; tail 1" 9". "Nest domed, suspended, composed of wool and fibres, and lined with feathers and goat's hair." The eggs, three in number, are so unlike those of any Sun-bird with which I am acquainted, that, had I not confidence in Mr. Ortlepp's care and discrimination, coupled with his description of the nest, I should have concluded they did not belong to this species. They are white, spotted with intensely dark purple-brown and pale purple spots, chiefly forming a close-set ring, near the obtuse end. Axis $6\frac{1}{2}$ "; diam. $4\frac{1}{2}$ ".

144. *DICÆUM RUFESCENS*. The discovery of the eggs of this curious bird is owing to Mr. Jackson. They are white, spotted and blotched with brown and faint purple, chiefly in the form of a ring at the obtuse end. Axis 9"; diam. 6". The nest is usually concealed in the bottom of a bush. To the same gentleman I also owe the eggs of

160. *DRYMÆCA SUBRUFICAPILLA*. They are white, faintly tinged with green, and spotted with small red-brown and purplish spots, chiefly at the obtuse end, in the form of a zone. Axis 7"; diam. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ". These differ from the usual type of *Drymæca*-eggs in South Africa, wherein the ground-colour is usually a decided blue or green, with large irregular blotches.

165. *DRYMÆCA THORACICA*. Le Vaillant states that the eggs of this species are reddish-white ; my son has forwarded several from Grootevadersbosch, near Swellendam, which are white, spotted with various-sized dark brownish-red spots chiefly at the obtuse end, and somewhat in the form of a ring. Axis $7\frac{1}{2}$ "; diam. 6".

171. *DRYMÆCA BRACHYURA*. To my description of this species must be added that the vent and belly are of a pale

citron-yellow. My original specimen was very imperfect; but Mr. Ortlepp has sent several from Colesberg in fine order. He describes the nest as a "small cup of wool and wild cotton, lined with a few grass-stems, and placed in a bush; the eggs, three in number, are pure white, minutely spotted on the whole obtuse end with red dots. Axis 7"; diam. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ".

172. *DRYMÆCA AFRICANA*. Mrs. Barber sends eggs of this species, which are, equally with those of the two preceding, most unlike the typical eggs of *Drymæca*. They are white, more or less clouded (at the obtuse end chiefly) with spots and blotches of a washed-out indian-ink colour. Axis 11"; diam. 7".

176. *CALAMODYTA RUFESCENS*. Mr. Ortlepp sends this little Warbler from Colesberg, and informs me that "the nest is a cone of wool and straw placed between reeds and rushes; eggs three." These are white, spotted throughout, but chiefly at the obtuse end, with various-sized brown and light purple irregular dots and blotches. Axis 8"; diam. 6". I am more than ever convinced that the two species described by Le Vaillant under the names of "*La caquetteuse*" and "*L'isabelle*" should be referred to this species, or to this and the next. I put no confidence in his statement that *L'isabelle* lays pure white eggs.

183. *BRADYPTERUS CORYPHÆUS*. Mr. Jackson, Mr. Ortlepp, and my son, all forward eggs of this species, which differ from those found by me at Beaufort, in that they are irregularly blotched with brown. Axis 9"; diam. 6". They are very Saxicoline in appearance—as is also the nest, off which I several times put the bird whose eggs I describe in my 'Catalogue.'

I have received eggs of various Chats, but leave their description for another occasion, as I am convinced from specimens that have been forwarded, that several species have been overlooked or confounded with known species. I believe that Le Vaillant has mingled several together under the "*Traquet montagnard*;" but must leave a solution of my doubts till I acquire a larger series of specimens.

207. *PRATINCOLA PASTOR*. Mr. Ortlepp writes, "Nest like that of *Motacilla capensis*, in a head of rank grass, near the river's side." Three eggs sent are light verditer, indistinctly

clouded with faint reddish markings, which coalesce and form a ring at the obtuse end. Axis 9''; diam. 7''.

301. *DICRURUS MUSICUS*. Few eggs that have come into my hands have given me greater pleasure than the egg of this species. A description without a coloured drawing gives but a faint idea of its great beauty. The nearest approach I know of to it, in form and coloration, are the eggs of the genus *Tyrannus*. My son took a single egg from a nest in a thick, large bush. It is of the most delicate pink colour, unevenly marked throughout with various-sized spots of pale and dark purple. Axis $11\frac{1}{2}$ ''; diam. $8\frac{1}{2}$ ''.

Le Vaillant states that the spots are black and generally square. Nothing of this is visible in the lovely example before me. Since this was written he has sent two more.

330. *CORVUS ALBICOLLIS*. Several eggs of this fine Crow have been sent from various correspondents. They are pale green, profusely marked with dark brownish-green blotches, confluent on the obtuse end. Axis 1" 11''; diam. 1" 3''.

344. *JUIDA FULVIPENNIS*. Mr. H. Jackson has discovered this species breeding at Nels Poort, in holes in banks. The eggs are of a lovely light verditer, minutely speckled throughout with brown. Axis 1" 4''; diam. 9''.

353. *DILOPHUS CARUNCULATUS*. Mr. J. P. Maunsel Weale writes me word from Bedford that some years ago this species appeared in that neighbourhood in considerable numbers. "They built on thorn-trees on the Page River; their nests were described as filling the tree, so that it resembled a Kaffir hut." This confirms the account given me by Mr. Schwartz, of Zoetendalsvley. It is singular that they should thus migrate to nests in different places.

365. *HYPHANTORNIS AURICAPILLUS*. I had failed to recognize this species until a specimen collected by Mr. Andersson in Damara Land attracted my attention. I am now quite satisfied that this is only a small race of *H. capitalis*, into which its name must sink as a synonym. Swainson's measurements (*Anim. Menag.* p. 346) puzzled me. They should be—Length 5" (instead of 6"), wing 3" 1''. I suspect he measured from a badly stuffed skin. I have now obtained *small races* of the following allied species of this family:—*H. capitalis*, *H. capensis*, *Plo-*

ceus capensis, *P. oryx*, and *Estrelda astrild*; and I have little doubt others have similar small representatives.

412. FRINGILLARIA IMPETUANI. Common at Nels Poort. Eggs white, spotted in a ring with obscure ill-defined cloudy blotches and pinpoint-dots of purplish brown. Axis 7''' ; diam. 5½'''.

415. FRINGILLARIA TAHAPISI. Found at Colesberg by Mr. Ortlepp.

447. COLIUS ERYTHROPUS. Does not breed in holes, but makes a cup-shaped nest, as do the other two South-African species. My son has sent in the eggs of *C. striatus* in some plenty. Many of them are curiously streaked with a dull golden yellow. The ground-colour of all is a dirty chalky-white, rough to the touch.

540. EUPODOTIS CRISTATA. Last (but certainly not least) I have the pleasure to announce the acquisition to the South-African Museum stores (wherein are deposited all the specimens above described) of a magnificent egg of this noble Bustard. This was received from Mr. Jackson. It is of a pale fawn-coloured ground (with a tinge of green about it), unevenly spotted and blotched with various-sized and -shaped brown and faint purple markings, chiefly at the obtuse end. Axis 3'' 4''' ; diam. 2'' 5'''.

My friend Mrs. Barber takes exception to the statement (B. S. Afr. p. 252) that the eggs of parasitic birds usually resemble those of the foster parent. She writes that "the eggs of all the Cuckoos that I have met with in this country are white, and moreover they are nearly always larger than the eggs of the bird in whose nest they are deposited. With regard to distinguishing eggs, birds of all kinds are exceedingly short-sighted. We used to amuse ourselves by changing the eggs in all the birds' nests that we knew of. The owners seldom left them, but took to the strange eggs; and unless their habits were remarkably different, they would blindly rear each other's young, just as they do the young Cuckoos. It is not necessary, therefore, for nature to make this provision. My second son once filled a Cape Canary's nest with so many eggs, that when the young were hatched, they were more than the poor birds could manage to provide for; and, having repented of his mischief, he was

obliged to help them to bring up their young." This strikes me as being a good hint for those who are rearing valuable birds.

I have to chronicle the arrival of another bird within South-African limits. At the end of last month I visited Robbin Island, in the mouth of Table Bay, and for the first time saw a lovely little Tern, which I refer to *STERNULA BALENARUM*, Strickl. (Contr. Orn. 1852, p. 160), already received through Mr. Andersson, from Walvisch Bay. Out of the four specimens seen, we obtained three. Yesterday, while returning from the mail-steamer, I again saw this diminutive Tern sitting on the anchor-buoys in the roadstead.

A strange mistake has crept into my 'Catalogue,' owing to the disjointed manner in which it was written, and to the wrong identification of a species. Another bird has been mistaken for *Laniarius icterus* (no. 324). A real example of this noble Bush-Shrike has been sent by Mr. H. Bowker from the forests of Kwelegha, near Kingwilliams-town. He writes :—" They are common in some parts, and make a curious noise, something like the word 'mope,' drawn out into a long, low whistle. I have some doubts in asserting that the bird calls day and night, as I think there are two species of them. They are known among the Dutch farmers by the name of 'Spoke-vogel' (*i. e.* ghost-bird); and the low call of the bird during the night certainly would lead a person inclined to superstition to think that there was something supernatural in it."

This is the first time this species has been found in South Africa. Swainson's bird, figured (badly by the way) in the 'Birds of West Africa' (vol. ii. p. 137, pl. 22), was from West Africa; and the original of Le Vaillant's much better figure came from Senegal. The description, and so forth, in my 'Catalogue' should be referred to the previous species, *L. rubiginosus*.

Here I must close for the present, but at some future time shall send you another budget. I trust I may have succeeded in awakening an interest in our South-African birds in some of your readers, and that the information I send may not be unacceptable to them.

Yours very truly,

E. L. LAYARD.

P.S. In 'The Ibis' for 1866, Mr. Blyth says (p. 354):—"There must surely be some mistake about *Picus macii* occurring in Ceylon." I felt certain that I never got it; so I referred to the 'Birds of India' to see what Dr. Jerdon could have said about it. To my surprise I found (vol. i. p. 273) "and (according to Layard) to Ceylon." Now I included it only on Dr. Kelaart's authority (Ann. & Mag. N. H. 2nd ser. xiii. p. 448), adding "*sed non vidi*." The Doctor and I did not always agree about our identifications. I sent all my birds to Mr. Blyth, as I did not trust my own judgment. I fear many of Dr. Kelaart's species are wrongly named, but I do not wish to have his errors fathered on me.

SIR,—I have two remarks to make on Captain Beavan's "Notes on various Indian Birds" ('Ibis,' 1867, pp. 430-455).

407. *Garrulax leucolophus*. The true Himalayan race is common in Arakan; but that found on the banks of the Salween is *G. belangeri*, Lesson, with the back wholly rufous, and the white of the breast extending down the middle portion of the abdominal region. I never saw an intermediate specimen. *G. bicolor*, Lesson, of Sumatra, is equally albescent, as must also be *G. diardi*, Lesson (*G. leucogaster*, Walden, P. Z. S., 1866, p. 549; 'Ibis,' 1867, pp. 381, 382), of Siam and Cochin China. I also obtained *G. chinensis* (Scop.), in company with *G. belangeri*, in Upper Martaban.

461. *Pycnonotus pygæus*. Should not this rather range as *P. cafer* (L.)? See Mr. Layard's remarks in his 'Birds of South Africa' (pp. 139, 140). *Brachypodius melanocephalus*, marked by Capt. Beavan with a note of doubt, is common in Burma.

The only addition to the avifauna of India, of which I know at present, is the common Bean-Goose (*Anas segetum*). Mr. Gould possesses the skin of one procured in the Dukhun.

I am, &c.,

E. BLYTH.

8 January 1868.

SIR,—It may be worth recording that the example of Pel's Owl (*Scotopelia peli*, Bp.), which was described and figured from the life in 'The Ibis' for 1859 (pp. 445-448, pl. xv.), died on the 30th October, 1867, having been in excellent health till within a few days previously. On dissection it proved to be a female, and showed no traces of morbid character, except some of cerebral congestion. The skin and sternum of this specimen have been preserved for the Norwich Museum.

I am, yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

London, Feb. 8th, 1868.

SIR,—On looking over the last number of 'The Ibis,' I have been brought up by Mr. Swinhoe's *Ægithaliscus anophrys* (p. 64). If you will be good enough to refer to Part vii. of my 'Birds of Asia,' published in 1855, you will find this bird figured and described by me as *Psaltria concinna*, from a specimen (at that time the only one I had seen) in Mr. Eyton's collection, procured at Chusan. I then remarked that the species is most nearly allied to *P. erythrocephala*, but that it "differs from that bird in its smaller size, in the paler colour of the crown, in the absence of the post-superciliary stripe, in the black of the throat being entirely surrounded with white, and in the richer rusty-red of the flanks." I have since received other specimens from China. I am, &c.,

JOHN GOULD.

Abyssinian Field-force, Annesley Bay,
March 4th, 1868.

SIR,—I send you a line just to let you know how I am getting on; but it will be a short one, as the post leaves to-morrow, and I am in the midst of the bustle of landing myself, goods and chattels. I have as yet been unable to do much. The country round I have twice visited since my arrival on the 24th February. The first trip proved unlucky, as we got caught by a gale of wind in the ship's boat, and were nearly being either starved or drowned. The specimens I had procured were all destroyed by the water in the boat, and my guns were nearly as

bad. On the 29th I went about a dozen miles up the country. I have as yet only procured a Kite, a Buzzard, a Kestrel, and a Dove with a very long tail; and these with the utmost ingenuity will not make up material for a despatch; but you may rest assured that I will send you one as soon as I can.

I am, &c., W. JESSE.

SIR,—A mistake has crept into the notice of Mr. Lawrence's *Heliomaster spectabilis* in the last number of 'The Ibis' (*suprà*, p. 115). I have a male specimen obtained by Arcé in Costa Rica, which cannot be specifically separated from the *Eugenes fulgens* of Mexico and Guatemala. It is therefore not only possible, but more than probable, that *H. spectabilis* is identical with *E. fulgens*, the only difference being the greater length of the bill in the former.

I have, &c., OSBERT SALVIN.

Mr. Bartlett, the able and obliging superintendent of the Zoological Gardens, has been kind enough to inform us that for some weeks past a cock *Apteryx mantelli* in the menagerie has been (*more Ratitarum*) industriously incubating two eggs laid by his mate, the old hen sent to England in 1850 (!) by the then Governor of New Zealand. The proverb forbids our counting our chickens before they are hatched; but we may in this case not unreasonably look forward to some produce, for it can hardly be that this exemplary husband should give himself so much trouble unless he had good ground for expecting a satisfactory result; and we trust that the aged captive, his wife, may see her old age surrounded by a flourishing family of young Kiwis.

The extensive collection of the late Prince Maximilian of Wied is, we understand, for sale. We are informed that it contains about 4000 specimens of 2358 species of birds, besides a large number of other *Vertebrata*. It has been valued by Professor Troschel of Bonn at £2000, and the widow of his late Highness is very desirous of meeting with a purchaser who will take the whole collection.

In our last number we made (p. 112) the mistake of confounding the editor of the 'Archives Cosmologiques' with his father, M. CHARLES F. DUBOIS, the author of 'Planches Coloriées des Oiseaux de la Belgique,' and a companion work on the remaining European species not observed in Belgium. The error is the more serious, as we regret having to announce the death of this gentleman, which took place on the 12th of November last. But this, unfortunately, is not the greatest loss to Ornithologists we have to record: our friend Mr. CHARLES JOHN ANDERSSON, who we had hoped would have shortly been in a position to publish the work on the Ornithology of South-western Africa, in behalf of which we some time ago endeavoured to excite the support of our readers, died in the month of July last, in Damara Land, whither he had returned to carry on anew the researches necessary for his intended task. As an ardent follower of our science and an accurate observer, this gentleman had few equals; and his early death, hastened, in all probability, by the hardships and disasters which his zeal for discovery had prompted him to undergo, leaves a blank not likely to be soon filled. We have further to lament the death, on the 14th of March, of another friend, M. EDOUARD VERREAUX, of Paris, in his younger days also an African explorer, but for many years widely known and respected as the head of a commercial firm from which ornithologists in all lands have received large benefits. Indeed the "Maison Verreaux," under the able superintendence of its late chief and his brother, had justly attained a reputation far beyond that of any establishment of the like kind in any country. Finally we have to mention the recent decease, at a very advanced age, of the agreeable author of the 'Gleanings in Natural History,' and many other similar works—Mr. EDWARD JESSE. Though this gentleman, it may be said, had no claim to a place among scientific zoologists, yet the attractive character of his writings, especially to the young, has probably been the means of turning the attention of many persons to the study of Natural History; and accordingly his death should not pass unnoticed here.